



Christ's love  
moves the world  
to reconciliation  
and unity

World Council of Churches  
**11th Assembly**

31 August to 8 September 2022  
Karlsruhe, Germany

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**EN**

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## Sending Prayer

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### CALL TO PRAYER

♪ 57 In Christ There is No East or West (sung in all languages)

### OPENING PRAYER

L1: O Lord, come and plant desire in our hearts to dwell in unity.

L2: We will join hands and be your community, lifting up your name.

L1: Your love calls us to deeds of inclusion and solidarity.

L2: Your love compels us to be in fellowship with our neighbors and God.

**C: Your love calls us to be your witnesses.**

### THEME SONGS

♪ 79 Christ's love moves the world (sung in German)

♪ 323 El amor de Christo (sung in Spanish)

♪ 239 Ruled by the love of Christ (sung in Taiwanese and English)

*Silence*

♪ 249 As many as has been baptized (sung in Arabic)

### LORD'S PRAYER

L: Let us join in the prayer which Jesus taught us, each in the language of our heart...

LORD'S PRAYER

♪ 49 Alleluia

**GOSPEL READING** John 21:15-19

When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my lambs.” A second time he said to him, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Tend my sheep.” He said to him the third time, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” Peter felt hurt because he said to him the third time, “Do you love me?” And he said to him, “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my sheep. Very truly, I tell you, when you were younger, you used to fasten your own belt and to go wherever you wished. But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will fasten a belt around you and take you where you do not wish to go.” (He said this to indicate the kind of death by which he would glorify God.) After this he said to him, “Follow me.”

♪ 49 Haleluya

♪ 51 Alleluia

**SERMON**

*Rt. Rev. Joy Evelyn Abdul-Mohan, Moderator of Synod, The Presbyterian Church of Trinidad and Tobago*

♪ 261 Kamana’o ‘I ‘o

**REFLECTION**

*The Reverend Canon Christopher Douglas-Hurimai*

*Silence*

♪ 175 Who is my Mother?

**ACT OF COMMISSIONING OF THE NEW CENTRAL COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

“Act justly, love mercy, walk humbly with your God.”

**INTERCESSIONS**

♪ 65 Je Nai Nan

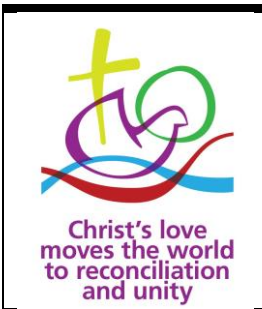
**BLESSING**

God bless you and keep you;  
God make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you;  
God lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.  
**Amen.**

♪ 277 Lord, make us one

♪ 151 Hamba nathi

♪ 69 Move when the Spirit says move (Pray, Sing, Dance, Go)



8 September

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Original

## Sending prayer - sermon

RT. REV. JOY EVELYN ABDUL-MOHAN  
MODERATOR OF SYNOD, THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

John 21:15-19

Dear Siblings in Christ, greetings in the name of Jesus Christ, our liberating Saviour. On this Thursdays in Black, I feel extremely blessed and humbled to share in worship with all of you through the proclamation of the Word of God in Karlsruhe, Germany at this 11<sup>th</sup> Assembly of the World Council of Churches.

### Introduction

Albeit, the Global Pandemic interrupted and disrupted our lives and livelihoods, there was a silver lining as the global church and by extension the world, discovered its ingenuity out of necessity. The new normal became our lived reality to protect and preserve lives.

Thus, the Omnipotent God of unconditional love and grace made it possible for us as an ecumenical family to gather in one place to worship, to engage in Pre-Assembly events, Home Groups and Bible Studies, to have dialogue and ecumenical conversations and to make decisions by way of consensus.

Since 2019, like other member churches, the Presbyterian Church of Trinidad and Tobago (PCTT), received the invitation to attend this 11<sup>th</sup> Assembly. There was excitement and pure joy to sensitize the church and community to this global event. So much so that at its adjourned meeting held in October 2019, the Synod of the PCTT adopted (with a slight variation) the Assembly's theme as its own for 2020, "*Christ's Love moves the World to Reconciliation and Unity – Mission Beyond Church Walls*".

The Assembly's theme became more relevant as COVID-19 created havoc in the world and took away from us many close family and friends.

We accepted that things would never be the same. However, even before the pandemic hit, churches in every region, were struggling with the question of how to be more contextual. To be the church in and beyond a pandemic we need to change the paradigm, the model for what the church should be like. For the church to bloom where it is planted, not merely endure, it needs now more than ever to be vigorous in its ecumenical and missional focus beyond its four walls.

So here we are again, perhaps exhausted after almost ten (10) days of being together – unity in diversity, but ready to return from whence we came, to the east, to the west, to the north and global south with the eagerness to share and implement what we have received at this assembly.

As we prepare to leave beautiful Karlsruhe and this awe-inspiring and enlightening 11<sup>th</sup> Assembly of the WCC, notwithstanding some of its challenges, I invite you to reflect with me on the theme: ***“The Audacity to Love as Christ Loves – an Imperative, not an Option”***. Please pray with me.

### **Prayer for understanding:**

*Eternal Spirit Divine, give us a fresh understanding of your Word today. Challenge us and change our lives as we encounter your wisdom.. Help us to see clearly the way to follow you and have the courage to live by your truth revealed in Jesus Christ. Amen.*

When I was asked to prepare this sermon based on the given text, John 21:15-19, I wrestled with the text, on which I would have preached many times as an Ordained minister for more than 33 years. As I attended the pre-assembly events and various sessions during the first five (5) days of the assembly I was inspired to hear the stories addressing not only the war in Ukraine but also other global realities especially those in my region such as the refugee and migrant crisis in Venezuela as well the Cuban and Haitian crises. ; I felt burdened with the the issues of reparations and repentance which reminded me that systemic racism is as real as life and serious as death; I cannot help but recall the words the Secretary General for Religions of Peace, Professor Azza Karam who urged that war must not be demonstrated as an option. God humbled my heart, to appreciate every word and every voice, urging me to sit where others sit.

### **The Conversation between Peter and Jesus - Setting the Scene for Audacious Love**

This biblical text assigned for today’s closing prayer is one of the biblical narratives that challenges the Christian community and ecumenical family to love as Christ loves.

The scene illustrates how the risen Christ restores, reinstates and commissions Peter for more fruitful service and leadership. The conversation begins with Jesus asking Peter three times the same question: *“Do you love me more than these?”* And Peter replies in the affirmative which immediately follows the command of Jesus to serve others. The conversation concludes with the prediction that Peter will face persecution as a result of his mission and with a simple command to follow Christ with consequences. Often times this threefold questioning has been juxtaposed with the three times Peter fell asleep in the Garden of Gethsemane and Peter’s triple denial of Jesus during his trial.

It is interesting to note that the first two times, when Jesus asked the question, the Greek word *‘Agape’* (self-sacrificial love) is used, the third time Jesus uses the word *‘Phileo’* (signifying affection, affinity or relational love) to confirm Peter’s loyalty and commitment as both disciple and friend.

It is scripturally evident that the Apostle Peter had declared himself to be more loyal to Jesus than anyone else, yet when the testing came, he fell apart. Peter took a great oath and swore to Jesus, *“Though all become deserters because of you, I will never desert you....even if I have to die with you, I will not deny you”*. (NRSV - Matthew 26:33-35).

The truth is that Peter was frail and weak. He had the capacity to make solid, insightful statements without considering the implications of what he said – to take the risk without counting the cost – and the consequences of saying yes to Christ. In others words, like many of us, Peter ‘put his foot in his mouth’.

This is indeed the condition of humanity. We all have good intentions. We all are eager to do the Lord’s work. We all want progress. Yet, how often we have failed to follow through with our promises and commitment. Certainly, this narrative reveals the fragility and spiritual myopia of humanity.

### **The Audacious Love of Jesus Christ - Restorative and Reconciliatory**

Yet this narrative is also an expression of how God restores the brokenness of humanity. It is clear that Simon Peter had lost his way following his denial. But it is also clear that Jesus wanted to restore and reinstate Peter; to give him a second chance to prove his loyalty and demonstrate his love to Christ over all else.

This demonstrates that God does not give up on people who have fallen. At the Cross, God shows that God is never finished with humankind. God loves, forgives and restores us, for God's grace is sufficient for all. We have been reconciled to God in Christ. 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 5:18 reminds us, "*For the love of Christ urges us on...All this is from God who reconciled us to himself through Christ and has given us the ministry of reconciliation*". Here, the Apostle Paul sets forth the heart of the gospel. We owe our salvation solely to the grace of God.

Perhaps we need to be reminded of this because we know what it means to fail at something and to wonder if, it will ever be the same again. That is why Peter's story of restoration is so meaningful to us. Despite the tragedy of his denial, the Lord reached out to him and drew him back into discipleship and eventually into leadership in the early Church.

We to, as an ecumenical family, are called to be part of that restorative process. We are called to preach the good news that no matter who we are, regardless of age, race, ethnicity, gender, or disability, we each have our life's purpose to fulfill as daughters and sons of the Kingdom.

### **Audacious Love – A Mandate to Serve - Feed My Lambs, Tend my Sheep and Follow me!**

Now, having been restored and reinstated by the risen living Lord, Peter was commissioned to the responsibility of tending Jesus' sheepfold, not from the perspective of exclusive authority, but from the perspective of a mutual and collective responsibility.

When Jesus called the disciples to follow him, he wanted them invariably to relinquish their personal agendas for his sake and God's mission, the '*missio dei*'. Nonetheless, God's mission should always shape the church's agenda. Jesus envisaged 'an audacious love' as the connecting link for the maintenance of this network of relationships and discipleship. "*I give to you a new commandment, that you love one another.* In John 13:34, *Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.*" Jesus if in our situation, would probably engage us in serious dialogue about the fabric of society – our need to take seriously our mutual and social responsibility – to serve others with dignity and pastoral care.

Sadly, how easy it is for us to sacrifice this audacious love to greed that even our best intentions are subdued by hegemony, glory, possessions and this constant jockeying for position. What's in it for me?

Have we not failed in our commitment to love Christ and serve him by loving and serving the people for whom he cares about? In our enthusiasm to give our time and resources toward a 'noble cause' or whatever, could we have loved these more than Christ? In our excitement and zeal to fulfil our roles and responsibilities in the Church and in our careers, in our homes and communities, have we loved these more than Christ? In setting our agendas at every level of church community life, regionally and internationally, have we loved these more than Christ?

When we have our agenda inclusive of all – for the benefit of all, then the cooperation and the commitment of all will be assured and Christ's audacious love will become more real to us. All are welcome and all means all. Consensus, togetherness, searching God's will together with prayer – deliberating with one mind and heart with the audacious love of Christ, we will come closer to fulfilling the will and purpose of God for our lives and the lives of others. No longer will we engage in a Theology of Victimology, but a Theology of Hope and Healing.

Let us think for a while and ask ourselves. Is the very same agape love reflective in our present activities and engagements? Are we able to reach out to those on the margins and as a sign of God's presence to bring life into their lives? Are we able to fetch healing to the suffering people around us? What motivates us to do what we are doing? Do we love Jesus more than these?

## **CONCLUSION: The Audacity to Love as Christ Loves - an imperative not an option**

It seems to me that the audacity to love as Christ loves is an imperative and not an option for the church or its partners. As Christ lives in us and we in him, the constant interchange of his audacious love in the innermost part of our being can make us vehicles to move the world to reconciliation and unity.

The audacity to love as Christ love requires that we be honest with ourselves and accept that we are bound to disagree within our own denominational family while in greater agreement with others. His Grace, Archbishop Jason Gordon of Trinidad and Tobago coins it this way, *“Many people think the biggest challenges to unity of the Church comes from other denominations. There are times when I found more agreement with the people of other denominations than with some Catholics.”*

Our task as an ecumenical community is that of building the bridge between others and ourselves through this audacious love of Christ – a love that is life-changing and liberating.

The way human beings relate and treat each other will say more to the world at large than any programme, project or activity the church or its related organizations can ever have. Thus, I believe there is an unequivocal basis for this audacious love of Christ in the Golden rule as recorded in Luke 6:31, *“Do to others as you would have them do to you”*. (NRSV) This means that the audacious love of Christ is based on justice and equality - it means equal standards for all. It means an acknowledgement and recognition of not only our own self-worth, but also that of others. It means challenging the status quo and any system that stymie the fullness of life for all.

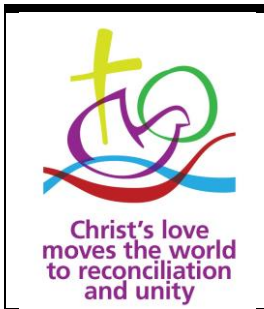
In his very touching presentation, at the EDAN Pre-Assembly, Rolando Mauro said that *“persons with disabilities are figures of divine restoration and God restores his chosen. We are all God’s chosen.”* He emphasized this point by referring to the then USA President George H.W. Bush when signed into law, the Americans with Disabilities Act and stated, *“Let the shameful walls of exclusion finally come tumbling down”*.

Whatever we say or do should inspire and promote the restorative, reconciliatory magnanimous love of Christ and the unity of the Body of Christ in all its splendor - not mediocrity, division, envy, selfishness or pride. The search for love, reconciliation and unity therefore begins with each one of us from where each one sits and serves. We leave this assembly determined to move from hostility to hospitality, to love in action.

So, dear siblings of God, when we pray for love, reconciliation and unity in a troubled world what do we think of? Perhaps we think of a time when wars shall end, where justice, righteousness and freedom will flow like an ever-flowing stream. Where poverty, rape, gender-based violence, heinous crimes, human-trafficking, systemic racism, food shortages, the refugee and migrant crisis, xenophobia, stigmatization, oppression and discrimination of every kind and the raping of the earth will all cease. We think of a time when governments will rule with integrity and the principles of fairness and with a preferential option for the poor; with better health care systems in place so that the quality of human life will be at its pinnacle. We think of a day when climate change and the crises associated with it will be acknowledged as real and not a fallacy.

In this nuclear age and turbulent times when the sands of time are rapidly running out, surely the ecumenical family should begin to take more seriously the audacious love of Christ, the mandate to feed the sheep and tend the lambs as **an imperative from Christ our, Lord and not an option**. This is indeed a catalyst for meaningful change.

***In the name of God, our Creator, Christ, our Saviour and the Holy Spirit, our Teacher and Counsellor. Amen.***



8 September

**EN**

Original

## Sending prayer - reflection

THE REVEREND CANON CHRISTOPHER DOUGLAS-HURIWAI

A hallmark of my people, the indigenous Maori of New Zealand is the centrality of ritual in our culture. From the time my ancestors first set foot on the land that we now know as New Zealand, ritual was present. Perhaps the most important of these rituals are our traditional rituals of encounter. These rituals of encounter have at their core a singular purpose, to ensure the humanity and dignity of all people is not only acknowledged but maintained.

The formal ritual of encounter is a welcome ceremony known as “powhiri” where calls of welcome are led by the women of the tribe, formal speeches are made, songs are sung, and then finally a communal meal is shared by those gathered to bring the process to a close. Through this process the ancient genealogical lines of both the home people and the visitors are remembered and honoured. The end result of this ritual of encounter is that there is no longer a distinction between home people and visitor, instead all are considered joined together in common relationship – all are considered one.

While Powhiri is a corporate act vested in the tribe and sub-tribe, there is another sacred ritual of encounter that is more intimate and personal, exchanged whenever Maori greet one another, it is called “Hongi.” This intimate act of shared acknowledgement is both physical and spiritual and consists of the pressing together of two peoples’ noses and foreheads while at the same time deeply inhaling a shared breath. This breath is reminiscent of the breath God breathed into the body of his first creation to produce life. It is this intermingling of breath that fundamentally acknowledges the humanity of the other and when coupled with the words “Tena Koe” creates a powerful starting point for a pilgrimage of reconciliation and unity.

“Tena Koe” is the formal language greeting of my people and literally means “That is You” or when more properly translated “I see you.” This greeting gives an insight into the Maori mind and the importance of acknowledgement of the other in Maori society. For Maori, the beginning of any encounter, be it corporate or personal is an acknowledgement of the humanity and dignity of the person standing before them. When Maori say “I see you” we are really saying I see you in all your created glory, your wounds, your scars, your hopes, your aspirations. I see your ancestors, I see your descendants, I see and acknowledge the divine in you.

“Tena Koe” then is not just a simple acknowledgement, but a commitment to the other that we are now joined together. Your humanity is now bound up in mine, your sacredness is bound up in mine, and your dignity bound up in mine.

The theme of this the 11<sup>th</sup> Assembly of the World Council of Churches has been in many ways a ritual of encounter for the last eight days. It is not just an encounter between those of us who have participated

in the assembly, but it is an encounter between all of us and the love of God in Christ. Perhaps even more than that, it is an encounter between Christians everywhere and with what the love of Christ is demanding of us. Christ's love moves the world to reconciliation and unity because it brings us into the embrace of a hongi, its nose pressed to ours, its forehead pressed to ours and with a shared sacred breath pronounces with infinite mercy and grace "Tena Koe – I See You"

As we return to our homes, empowered, inspired and perhaps even challenged by the theme of this assembly it would do us well to be reminded of what unity and reconciliation means to those for whom justice is denied and those who perpetrate injustice. For too long the burden of reconciliation and unity has fallen on the shoulders of those to whom justice is denied. As an indigenous people in the church we have experienced multiple occasions where the expectation was on us to exercise grace, to forgive, to forget, and to move on all in the name of unity, while the perpetrators of injustice were free to continue living their lives protected by their privilege.

The love of Christ that motivates us towards reconciliation and unity however says to us "I see the hurt and the wounds of the oppressed. I see the struggle and the brokenness of the oppressors." Reconciliation and unity is vital to the future of not only the Christian Church but of all humanity. An acknowledgement of the injustices endured by indigenous people, minorities, women, children, the differently abled, the silenced and the ignored is the first step on the pilgrimage towards reconciliation and unity.

I would like to end this reflection if I may by paying a tribute to a hero of mine, someone who I consider to be holy man and who has graced this Assembly not only with his presence, but with his wisdom and love. The Most Reverend Winston Halapua, Archbishop Emeritus. I am thankful that I was a student at seminary during the time Archbishop Winston spent as the principal of one of the colleges and so I was lucky enough to regularly encounter him. These moments of contact however were fleeting; a gentle smile as we passed each other between classes, an offer to clear away plates at a shared lunch, small words exchanged as we waited for a church service to begin. No deep conversation, no back and forth, just meaningless chit-chat. Or so I thought.

As a first-year student at theological college I was on the extreme opposite end of the spectrum to the Archbishop. I was a postulant for holy orders, he was a bishop. I was a student, he was a principal. I was in my early twenties, and he was an elder. I was insignificant, and this man was one of the most significant people not only in the college, but our entire church. I meant nothing to him. Or so I thought. And then one day, as the college made its annual pilgrimage to some far-off place, Archbishop Winston and I had occasion to share a much longer time with one another, a three-hour car ride in fact. During this drive Archbishop Winston asked how my studies were going, somehow, he knew I was enrolled at Auckland University. He then asked how my wife's work was going, somehow, he knew she had recently begun a new job. And then he asked after my sister, somehow, he knew she had recently been diagnosed with cancer.

Up until this point I had assumed the smiles between classes, the clearing away of lunch trays, and the words exchanged before prayer were of little significance, and perhaps even meaningless. It wasn't until after that car-ride I realized that every moment the Archbishop encountered me, he wasn't just noticing me, he was seeing me. He wasn't just hearing me, he was listening, he wasn't just in the same space as me, he was lovingly present.

This encounter with Archbishop Winston has been foundational to my understanding of who and what we are called to be as people who would dare follow the Christ, and indeed as people who would allow ourselves to be moved by the love of Christ towards reconciliation and unity.

That is the power of Tena Koe it transforms noticing into seeing, hearing into listening, and love into action.



My sacred siblings of the 11<sup>th</sup> Assembly of the World council of Churches, the time has come for us to say with renewed vigour “Tena Koe” to one another, to acknowledge each other’s humanity and commit to ensuring dignity is maintained. To draw each other into the sacred embrace of the hongī and tell one another WE SEE YOU! And then once we have said this to each other, to go out and live our lives as if it is true.

Now would you please turn to the person sitting next to you and say Tena Koe, I See You!